

NSC BRIEFING

1 August 1957

GUATEMALA

- I. Defense Minister Col. Juan Francisco Oliva is in virtual control of Guatemala following President Castillo's death on 26 July.
- A. He controls army and has declared 30-day "state of siege."
- B. Army and government machine have chosen him as next president.
1. He reportedly plans to extend state of siege long enough to become constitutionally eligible for presidency. (He must resign from cabinet six months before election.)
- C. Until elections are over, however, political instability can be expected. Army officers may attempt coup in next few days.

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II.

- Castillo aware of assassination plots against him. Informed speculation tends to doubt official story of Communist inspiration.
- A. The underground Communist Party has opposed assassination or revolution until after it has built up mass support.
1. Pro-Communist ex-presidents Arbenz and Arevalo publicly rejoiced, however.
2. The army claims to have documentation proving Vasquez was a Communist. This overplaying of the Communist angle suggests the army is covering another motivation or at least establishing a scapegoat to cover for letting assassin become member of presidential bodyguard.
- B. Vasquez may have been fanatic operating independently.
- C. Also possible that ultra-rightist opponents of Castillo's middle-of-road policies may have used Vasquez.